



Training Reaches Inside Prison Walls

A prison-based training program, part of Governor John G. Rowland's workforce development initiatives, this spring graduated its first class at York Correctional Institution, when a group of inmates took a "STEP" toward rebuilding their lives on the outside.

The graduates of the Skills Toward Employment Program (STEP) are all scheduled for release by this summer and will leave prison with more marketable skills than when they entered. All of the women inmates of STEP have children at home receiving some form of state assistance. Governor Rowland said STEP helps a group of adults with little or no job experience better care for their families and creates a more skilled labor force for employers.

The STEP project is one of three statewide initiatives under Governor Rowland that deals with giving non-custodial parents skills and training. "As a state, we have a responsibility to help those of us with fewer opportunities in life than many of us have had," Governor Rowland said. "These women have made a commitment to making their lives better once they leave prison and creating a more nurturing atmosphere for their children."

Two classes totaling about 25 inmates completed their course work over two separate sessions. The training involved computer work, resume writing, creating cover letters, and mentoring from professionals from the state's community college system. The program was administered by Quinebaug Community College.

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Technical College and Career Center Team up for Smith & Wesson

Northern Maine Technical College and Career Center staff recently partnered to provide services to Smith & Wesson located in Houlton, Maine. Smith & Wesson, a small arms and enforcement restraints manufacturer and one of the area's largest corporate clients, decided to add a new manufacturing line. With a projected start-up time of June 2001, Smith & Wesson began working with Northern Maine Technical College in late January to provide extensive pre-hire training to a group of 20 potential employees.

With little time to recruit for this project, Sonja Fongemie, Dean of Continuing Education at Northern Maine Technical College, asked for help from the Houlton Career Center. The Career Center staff provided assessment and screening of the applicants and assisted in the interview process.

"The Career Center in Houlton is the primary reason why we were able to move so quickly on this project. They were very accommodating and helpful to the applicants, and even adjusted the Center hours to allow access after normal business hours and on Saturdays to give everyone the opportunity to apply," states Sonja Fongemie. "The professionals at this Center welcomed this challenge and helped Smith & Wesson to guarantee that only those with the right math and reading levels were accepted into the training program. We had to find people with a fairly high level of basic skills because the 125-hour training program was very rigorous. The Career Center helped us meet that goal."

The training was developed to prepare individuals for positions as

entry-level Machine Operators and Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Operators and included courses on ergonomics and safety, technical math, blueprint reading, precision measurement, lathe, milling, and CNC operations. In addition to the technical training, Smith & Wesson and the College also felt it was important to give these students some soft-skills training. Courses and workshops in effective team communication, problem solving, and quality concepts were developed to match the needs of the company.

This training was funded by Maine Quality Centers, a training initiative providing customized

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REGIONAL ROUNDUP

From the Desk of the Regional Administrator . . .

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 presented us with a mandate: To provide universal access to our services to all customers through a One-Stop system that is customer-focused. And our customers are not only Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth, but also the special populations within these categories.

Some of the special populations we serve include:

- Displaced homemakers seeking to enter the workforce for the first time;
- Migrant and seasonal farm workers looking to move from farm work into more self-sufficient jobs that will ensure the well-being of their children;
- Veterans needing training to keep up with technological advances;
- Non-natives with limited English proficiency working to be a part of our labor force;
- Older workers remaining longer in our technology oriented workforce;
- Single parents looking for employment and training opportunities that also take into consideration their need for quality and affordable child care;
- Persons with disabilities seeking first jobs or better jobs; and
- Women and minorities interested in training for non-traditional, high-skilled jobs that pay higher wages and have better benefits.

Our challenge is to continue to improve the services we provide to special populations. To succeed in this challenge, we need to learn more about the barriers these groups encounter and to understand the environment special populations face. We can do this by visiting their com-

munities, by learning about the benefits diversity brings into our workforce, and by listening to our customers. Then, we can proceed to develop employment and training programs that address the unique needs of these special populations. In these times of resource sharing, I encourage you to keep working with community-based organizations, unions, faith-based organizations, immigrant worker coalitions, legal services organizations, governmental agencies and employer associations. We must establish non-traditional partnerships that will yield innovative ways to make a good job with a self-sufficient income a reality for all our customers.

The key to the successful implementation of employment and training programs for special populations is to reach out to those communities and to talk to our customers about our services. We need to go to our special population customers and encourage them to visit the One-Stop centers and to use the services available there so they may reap the benefits of our innovative and effective programs. It is essential, too, that we proactively seek feedback from these communities on how well both our One-Stop centers and our system serve them. Only then can we build on the foundation for a successful partnership. Satisfied customers will come back to see us, tell their friends about the effectiveness of our services and ensure that we remain competitive with the private sector.

In this exciting journey of change and continuous improvement, let me encourage you to use the services my staff and I can pro-

vide to help you understand and break down the barriers that special populations face. We can highlight your successes, brainstorm with you on innovative ideas, and provide technical assistance on a wide array of issues. Remember that serving special populations is not just a mandate, but the right thing to do!



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UnumProvident Funds Program for Blind/Visually Impaired

A grant from UnumProvident Corporation will help fifteen blind and visually impaired young people find and keep jobs this summer. The award, totaling more than \$26,000, will fund Summer Vision 2001. Summer Vision is designed to facilitate supported work experiences for blind or visually impaired youth, ages 14-21.

"UnumProvident is pleased to support the Summer Vision 2001 Program," said John Roberts, Senior Vice President, "because it meshes so perfectly with our philosophy of helping people return to work and independence."

Several Portland-area companies participate in the program. Youth will be recruited from across the state. Those not from the greater Portland area will reside at the Iris Network (formerly the Maine Center for the Blind) for the duration of the seven-week Summer Vision project.

Summer Vision will be led by a partnership of the Training Resource Center (TRC), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Service's Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), and Employment Trust, Inc. (ETI). The consortium will leverage an additional \$17,000 to augment the UnumProvident Corporation award.

Some of the innovative features of Summer Vision include:

- Customized worksite placement;
- On-site job coaching;
- An intern college student who is blind or visually impaired to lead the program;
- Disability awareness training for participating companies;
- Vocational case management;
- Use of state-of-the-art adaptive equipment;
- Improved independent living and mobility skills for participants;
- Coordination with area school systems; and,
- Publication of a "white paper" to disseminate findings.

The project partners bring specific experience and expertise to Summer Vision. TRC, the lead agency, provides federally funded training and employment services for youth in Cumberland County. The DBVI staff in Portland and throughout the state will assist with recruitment, case management, and supporting the youth participants in sustaining meaningful long-term career opportunities. They will also advise companies on accessibility and computer technology issues, including adaptive equipment. TRC

and DBVI are also partners in the Portland Career Center.

ETI specializes in expanding and enriching employment opportunities for people with disabilities. ETI will develop individualized work sites for participants and provide coaching support to ensure that the work experience is a positive one for the young people, coworkers, and their employers. Participants will have an opportunity to choose from a wide variety of jobs based on their areas of interest and capability.

The goal of Summer Vision is to give young people a greater appreciation of the many types of jobs that are available to them despite their visual disabilities. Follow-up contact with participants and their schools after summer employment will serve to make the connection between education, careers, lifelong learning, and the achievement of job satisfaction. The project will demonstrate to employers that people with disabilities represent an expanded resource with the potential to become valuable additions to the local workforce.

Summer Vision is designed for duplication in any community where employers are interested in accessing an enriched staffing resource.

Career/Training Web sites

America's Career Info Net

<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/>

Connecticut Department of Labor

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/>

Connecticut Education & Training Inventory

<http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/eti/>

State of CT Job Openings

<http://www.das.state.ct.us/exam/>

My Job Search: Great Links to Job Search Sites

<http://www.myjobsearch.com/search.html>

O*Net Occupational Information Network

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Online Writing Lab: Purdue University

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Spanish: a free online tutorial

<http://www.studyspanish.com/>

University of Southern California, Santa Cruz

Exploring Nonverbal Communication:

<http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/~archer/index.html>



Young Adults Building a Future

The Young Adults Building a Future Program is designed to rebuild communities and lives. The ten-month program provides a safe, secure, and supportive environment to youth-at-risk in Hartford, ages 18-24. Students must live in a low-income household, be drug free, and be willing to become a dedicated and reliable employee.

During the program, students will be introduced to the skills needed to succeed in the construction industry. The hands-on skills attained include demolition, framing, window installation, drywall, blueprint reading, and operation of hand and power tools. Discipline, responsibility, and creativity are also encouraged.

With these skills, the students are able to help the community at large by building affordable housing, which in turn fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment. Instead of gang involvement and illegal activity, students' energy is being turned into something productive and positive.

Gil Martinez, Community Liaison at Co-Opportunity in Hartford, contacted Tracy Andruskiewicz, DOL's Hartford Office Youth Coordinator, about conducting work readiness workshops for the students. Co-Opportunity and DOL collaborated to provide opportunities to youth pursuing future employment. A commitment for eight weeks, 2 hours every Friday morning, was established.

Andruskiewicz's goal was to help the students with workforce development activities and provide them with tools to obtain employment.

Topics included were Self-Assessment, How to Find a Job, Resume Writing, and Career Exploration. She since has built a rapport with students and students are making individual appointments with her. One student called the day before his interview looking for last minute advice. She was also called upon by an employer to give a reference for one of her students. Andruskiewicz has become the familiar face at DOL for the youth.

Andruskiewicz's most important contribution to the students has been the way she emphasized that there is no right way to meet your educational and career goals. She spoke about how she didn't take the traditional path—she went to college full-time while working full-time. Her path to career success and education mirrors the path most of the students will have to travel.

She focused on the importance of employment skills and education in the real world and how we must make many life sacrifices in order to succeed. She promoted that being a Co-Opportunity student and developing work readiness skills are just the beginning of the "journey to your future."



Cross-Cultural Awareness Training

In response to a growing number of culturally mixed groups, including immigrants, migrants, refugees, and people with disabilities, who utilize the services provided by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), the

department launched an aggressive effort to provide better access and services to groups who are limited or non-English speaking. Beginning in 1999, MDOL selected The Language Exchange, Inc., of Portland, Maine, to help identify a number of public documents that should be considered for translation as well as languages into which they should be translated.

The initial phase of the project began with a study of the number of culturally diverse groups being served, and the languages spoken by the more prominent groups. The study targeted four bureaus within MDOL who had direct experience with serving people for whom English is not a native language. The departments included the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, the Bureau of Employment Services, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Bureau of Labor Standards.

After several months of studying and identifying the prominent non-English speaking groups served by the MDOL programs, the Language Exchange submitted a set of recommendations, which included a list of documents that should be translated, identification of the most prominent non-English languages spoken in Maine, and a training plan for all employees that would substantially increase staff knowledge of cultural awareness. In addition, once the actual translation of key documents is completed and with the help of The Language Exchange, Inc., the project will include a marketing campaign designed to raise awareness among the public to inform groups that MDOL has information available to assist individuals for whom the English language is a challenge.

The Career Center staff-training portion of the project was recently concluded with MDOL offering 12 sessions throughout the state. In

conjunction with The Language Exchange, Inc., staff training was provided by Kari Heirstad of Creative Concepts in Newton, Massachusetts, and included five modules. The first module invited participants to examine how they would define culture, where and how it is learned, and the concepts that are impacted by our cultural backgrounds (such as language, mental processes, sense of space and time, etc.). The second module included a "tour of the world" for the specific countries and populations that are prominent in Maine. The countries highlighted were Russia, Former Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Columbia, Venezuela, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The third module focused on immigration, the history of immigration to this country and the changes in the countries of origin of immigrants. The fourth module examined the journey that refugees face when coming to the United States. The final module, entitled "Bringing it Home," taught people about non-verbal communication that is often at issue when interacting with individuals from various cultures.

The overall response from staff participating in the training has been extremely positive with most participants expressing a significantly enhanced understanding of the various cultures they routinely encounter in their work. Participants also gained a much better awareness of the issues and concerns faced by immigrants and refugees. For more information about this project, contact Michaela Loisel, EEO Coordinator, MDOL, (207) 287-3337 or Kathy Dostie, Project Coordinator, Bureau of Employment Services, (207) 624-6390.

The Hard To Serve

"There are an estimated 1.3 million runaway youth in the United States. One in seven will run away sometime between the ages of 10 and 17." (*Frontline, National Runaway Switchboard Newsletter, Spring 1998*)

When Caren A. Stewart assumed the role of Youth Plan Manager, many months ago, she had no idea that at least one third of all her referrals would come from agencies working with homeless youth. She now feels that she was naive to think that homeless youth only resided in the urban areas of the United States and not in a small town in Maine.

Working with homeless youth involves many difficult issues. Frequently, they are dealing with not having their basic needs met, emotional issues and often substance abuse. It can be difficult to help youth facing such challenges to focus on employment when they are uncertain where will they be eating that day.

Unfortunately, there are limited services available to this population so it is extremely important to collaborate with those agencies that can help. "Often a youth may need to be referred to counseling, DHS for food stamps, Medicaid and the local food bank before we can even begin to work with him/her. Once a youth has some stability we can provide him/her with bus passes for transportation, clothing vouchers and the complete job-searching package of skills, including acting as positive role models and modeling effective workplace habits," states Caren Stewart.

Ms. Stewart has found that the homeless youth population is a challenging and difficult population to work with but also one of the most rewarding. "These young people

come to us with nothing. If we can succeed in helping them to obtain employment, hopefully, they will leave with a feeling of self-worth."



Assisting the Ex-offender in the Metro-North Region

"For the ex-offender, finding a job is the most important, and often the only, item on his agenda after release. The reasons for this, from the offender's perspective, are plain: Life is virtually impossible without money, and a job is the legitimate source for that commodity. Right after release, most offenders intend to move toward a law-abiding life. They understand that finding a job that pays a living wage is crucial to that effort. In addition, stable employment helps the released offender establish a fiscal relationship in mainstream society to become a contributing member of his community and family, and to develop a positive network of social support outside his criminal network." (*Returning Inmates: Closing the Public Safety Gap*)

The report *Returning Inmates: Closing the Public Safety Gap* published by Community Resources for Justice, Inc. in January of 2001 recognizes the significance of stable employment to the future success of the ex-offender in crafting a new life within the larger community. In *Building Bridges to Employment*, Career Source of the Metro North region has contracted with the Division of Inmate Training and Education of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC) to address this issue.

IN THE STATE OF . .

Through this collaboration, Career Source will provide a variety of services to enhance re-entry of ex-offenders into employment:

- Employment assessment and identification of barriers to employment through the development of a career development plan which addresses these challenges.
- Match employee skills with employers to obtain jobs (already exists through job matching software, job fairs, and employer forums).
- Employment-related workshops and group meetings.
- Post-employment follow-up services and retention supports.
- Assist individuals in identifying relevant educational and training opportunities and assist in securing financial aid.
- Computers and Internet accessibility in resource rooms at the centers.

Career Source will also assign a case manager exclusive to this contract. The case manager will receive referrals from the Reintegration Counselors or designated staff of the Building Bridges to Employment Program. The case manager will meet at the DOC facility with the offender and the reintegration counselor to share all relevant career and assessment information. Security and background clearance by the DOC is required.

- The case manager can address the barriers to employment and work with criminal record issues, the need for medical or mental health treatment, and facilitate connection and referral to other community support services to address any other barriers.

- Intensive case management and community outreach services are provided.
- The case manager is responsible for documenting the job search, assisting in the generation of job leads and ensuring the participant is accessing the services necessary to achieve employment.
- Following employment, comprehensive contact will be maintained for the first thirty days of employment. After the thirty-day retention, contact will be maintained for an additional sixty days; tracking will occur for a full ninety days of employment.
- The employment specialist/case manager can work with up to 40 clients at any one time. This includes clients in all facets of re-employment including the job search phase, the job retention phase, and should dislocation (job loss) occur, re-entry into job search.

Innovative approaches such as this will provide models for other areas in addressing a clear need on the part of the ex-offender and the community. To learn more about this effort contact Robert Hebert, Career Center Director at Career Source at (617) 661-7867.



. . New Hampshire

“E-TEAMS” Management Information System

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) identifies technology as a critical tool in making possible all aspects of information exchange including reporting, Management Information System (MIS), data collection, referral services, common case management, client as well as service tracking, and seamless service provision overall.

New Hampshire’s Unified Plan determined that in order to meet the data collection and reporting responsibilities under WIA, given the diversity of the partnership, a full spectrum e-government product would provide the optimal solution. The Unified Plan anticipated that the state would implement a WIA central database and client tracking system in order to meet federal reporting requirements. The Unified Plan also outlines that New Hampshire “is building a performance-based workforce development system and that all programs and providers will be measured based upon the results they achieve for customers and the return on investment of the public dollar.”

Technology Tip

Microsoft Word Tips

Instead of “dragging” across text to select a sentence to move or format, try holding down the CTRL key and clicking anywhere in the sentence. This will select the entire sentence, including the punctuation at the end.

To automatically size a table, position your cursor on the vertical border on the left side of the table. When your cursor turns into a double-headed arrow pointing left and right, double-click the edge of the vertical border. This will automatically size each column to fit the longest item in the column.

The Management Information System that will support this vision for the WIA Title I-B program is called E-TEAMS. The purpose of E-TEAMS is to implement a cost-effective information technology solution to meet the state's client tracking and reporting responsibilities under WIA utilizing an e-government solution. E-TEAMS will augment existing legacy and customer tracking systems among a diverse set of workforce partners so that a clear path for data to a reporting database can be established.

E-TEAMS is a web-based product and should not impact or interfere with the current MIS systems operating at the NH WORKS Centers. The reporting database will dynamically produce the necessary information and reports to meet the reporting requirements of WIA. E-TEAMS will eventually have the capability to track concurrent program participants with the NHES Information Transfer System, the New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation Information System and WIA Title I-B.

The new system will be live in all 13 NH WORKS Centers and accessible through the World Wide Web effective June 1, 2001. Community Action staff and partner agency administrators scheduled E-TEAM training in May. Kris Yannone, Workforce Development Coordinator for Southwestern Community Action Program, has been working with the interagency MIS Project Team (i.e., Kelly Clark, Patrick Lorden, Bob Pike, and George Palos, Project Manager for Covansys) to schedule and coordinate the training. Forty-four staff consisting of thirty-six field staff and eight administrators will be trained on the new system. For more information, contact Kelly Clark at (603) 229-3303 or send e-mail to kclark@nhworkforce.org, or call Bob

Pike at (603) 228-4189 or e-mail Rpik@nhes.state.nh.us.



.Rhode Island

Collaboration Helps Families Attain Self-Sufficiency

In the State of Rhode Island, there is a partnership between the Department of Labor and Training and the Department of Human Services. This initiative is called the Rapid Job Entry Program. The program assists clients who have been referred by the Department of Human Services' caseworkers. These clients receive Family Independence Program Cash Assistance and may be from either one or two parent families.

The Rapid Job Entry Program receives referrals from Family Court and the Child Support Enforcement Agency to assist non-custodial parents. Referrals from all sources may be English speaking, non-English speaking, or limited English proficient. All clients referred receive the same services and opportunities that the Rapid Job Entry Program provides.

The goal of the Rapid Job Entry Program is to engage families in employment preparation, placement, and workforce retention activities so that they may increase their family's income and move toward self-sufficiency. The Rapid Job Entry Program began in October 1997, and in its infancy was strictly a career assessment job-hunting program for welfare recipients. This program ran from October 1997 to March 1999, when it became apparent that the supportive services that many welfare recipients need were not a part of the program. At the time, a sepa-

rate Supportive Work Program existed and Rapid Job Entry Program clients did not receive services from this program.

The Rapid Job Entry Program evolved from March 1999, to its current existence as a comprehensive program that provides core services to assist clients in their career assessment, job search activities and entered employment activities. Also included are pre-employment services designed to provide clients in need of additional services with some basic skills training prior to employment. Throughout all program activities and through employment, Department of Labor and Training staff provide supportive services in order to help clients transition from welfare to the workplace.

The Rapid Job Entry Program operates in seven One-Stop Offices in Rhode Island known as netWORKri. For those clients who speak limited English or who are non-English speaking, the Department of Labor and Training subcontracts with a vendor—SER Jobs for Progress. SER operates the same Rapid Job Entry Program for this population.

During the first week of participation in the Rapid Job Entry Program, clients are assessed and evaluated for job readiness, education (math and reading) levels and skills training through a number of assessment tools including occupational interest inventories. One of the primary goals of the Rapid Job Entry Program is to assist the clients in developing realistic employment goals and taking responsibility for their personal and professional growth to achieve a life of self-sufficiency.

After the first week of assessment, work-ready clients continue on to a job search—job club activity. Clients who are not work-ready may continue on to classroom skills

training, remediation, or a combination of both. Once clients become employed, Department of Labor and Training staff follow-up with them for a six-month period. During this time, supportive services continue.

As a part of the Department of Labor and Training and the Department of Human Services Agreement, it is expected that a certain number of Rapid Job Entry Program clients achieve employment with a six-month retention. The Rapid Job Entry Program is a success because of the ongoing relationship between the Department of Labor and Training and the Department of Human Services, where communication is fostered between staff from the two state agencies. For further information about the Rapid Job Entry Program, contact Program Coordinator Camille Vollaro from the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training at (401) 462-8815.



Reaching Out to Potential Resources

As Vermont continues to struggle with a shortage of workers in nearly every sector of our economy, efforts are being made to reach out to populations previously overlooked as potential resources. As a result, the Career Resource Centers (CRCs), particularly those in close proximity to the state's eight Regional Correctional Facilities, are increasingly extending services to offenders while still incarcerated, as they approach their release dates. All twelve CRCs provide ongoing services to Department of Corrections clients who are under supervision of the Division of Probation and Parole.

The necessity to address the needs of this population is underscored by the fact that 14% of males in Vermont, ages 18 to 21, are currently under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Annually in Vermont, approximately 1,400 individuals re-enter society directly from a correctional facility, and history shows that far too many will fail to make a successful adjustment. A critical element to successful reintegration is the individual's ability to secure and maintain satisfactory employment. Too much time and too little money inevitably result in a relapse to old behaviors.

The ongoing services that are being provided to the corrections population, whether inmates or those under field supervision, include skill and interest assessments, employment counseling, workshops, case management, placement and job development, WIA eligibility determination, job training, support services, and referral to partner agencies as needed. Some of the more intense efforts include the following:

- The Rutland CRC serves Marble Valley Regional Correctional Center, where a feature of their educational program is the gardening/greenhouse component. Through this program, inmates can prepare to receive the Master Gardener credential, or pursue other aspects of landscaping, groundskeeping or related occupations. The CRC runs workshops on career information/preparation at the correctional facility for inmates in the program.
- The Newport CRC works with both the Field Services Unit (FSU), and the Northern State Correctional Facility, bringing the career decision making process on-site to the inmates,

where it has been enthusiastically received.

- At the St. Johnsbury CRC, a five-week workshop that met twice a week was recently conducted under the leadership of a CRC case manager. Eleven participants, ages 17 to 52, all in correctional housing under Field Supervision, completed the workshop, and in fact helped to design it. Together they explored different learning styles, established behavior guidelines for group participation, did self-assessments of work skills and interests, addressed drug and alcohol issues, learned and applied negotiation skills, learned how to look for jobs and learned how to market themselves to employers. They learned about employer expectations, and how to convince an employer that they've turned their lives around. The Department of Corrections Education Unit was a very supportive partner, providing workshop materials, and awarding education credits for completing the workshop. Eight participants were placed in jobs, and four weeks after "graduation" all but one are still employed. The workshop leader was impressed with the accumulation of work skills represented in the group, and recognized participants as a valuable resource in this tight labor market. Another workshop will begin shortly.

In an effort to formalize and expand these services, the Department of Corrections, together with DET, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and other partners will explore funding opportunities through the "Youthful Offenders Reintegration Grant."

Training Reaches . . .

(Continued from page 1)

College representatives will continue to monitor the progress of the inmates once they leave prison. The funding was provided through the Governor's Office for Workforce Competitiveness. Funding for the two courses amounted to \$47,500.

State officials said that given the tight labor market (Connecticut has ranked at the top nationally for low unemployment over the last several years) forcing employers to dip into non-traditional labor pools to find the workers they need.

STEP has already contacted at least 350 companies and has drawn interest from a number of them. In April, the Department of Corrections and Department of Labor, in an effort to better inform the private sector about the opportunities of hiring potential workers, staged a "job fair" at one of the state's correctional facilities which drew more than 100 employers.

Correction Commissioner John Armstrong said, "Our state's offender population may present particular challenges but may also be viewed as an untapped resource with great potential in developing an overall skilled workforce. We must continue to recognize this as we move forward and adjust and adapt our correction strategies to workforce needs."

The STEP initiative is one of eleven test pilots put forth by Governor Rowland statewide through the Office for Workforce Competitiveness. The programs serve nearly 300 disadvantaged adults who must overcome significant barriers to attain meaningful employment. The programs fall under one of three categories: careers paths, job retention, and non-custodial parent training.

Technical College. . .

(Continued from page 1)

education and training for new or expanding businesses at no cost. Maine Quality Centers was developed in 1994 to encourage job growth in the state. By utilizing the state's Technical College System, it provides flexible training based on company specifications.

Terry Wade, Plant Manager at Smith & Wesson said, "Because of the great job that the Houlton Career Center did with recruiting and screening these potential employees and the hard work of the College with the training program, we now have a great pool of people to draw from. Finding applicants with these skills in the immediate area would have been a challenge, but by recruiting the best of the applicants and training them for our operation, we will be able to fill the positions on our new line with qualified applicants and be productive from day one."

Computer Classes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Exciting new opportunities to learn the latest computer software applications are now available for deaf and hard of hearing people in Portland, Maine. The project is part of Ability *first*, a US DOL grant-funded program for people with disabilities, awarded to a partnership that includes Alpha One, a statewide independent living organization, the Coastal Counties Workforce Investment Board and its seven Career Centers, and Maine's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. One of the Ability *first* program components provides computer training in American Sign Language (ASL) for eligible residents of the six southern and coastal Maine counties. Plans to expand to the Rockland Career Center are in place, based on regional demand.

Since ASL differs in many ways from English, previous experiences in traditional classrooms have had limited

effect due to difficulty in communicating technical information in what is, for the deaf community, a foreign language. The process might be compared to an English-speaking person receiving instruction in Chinese. Hard of hearing people who do not use ASL can also take advantage of Ability *first* classes in English by using FM loop technology, which is a small transmitter/amplifier device.

Key to the success of the program was the recruitment of a person with mastery of ASL, deaf culture, and a high degree of competency in computers and technology. Such a person was found in John Dunleavy, a Boston resident who is deaf. John spends two weeks every month in Maine providing instruction in Microsoft Office Suite applications and outreach to the regional deaf community. Students attend half-day sessions in training and have access to the Ca-

reer Center's computer labs for practice, with John available to answer questions.

The broad objective of the Ability *first* project is to capitalize on people's abilities by offering technical skills training, benefits counseling, and job placement in the technology field for all people with disabilities, not just the deaf and hard of hearing. This includes those with mobility, visual, and cognitive impairments. To support the larger vision, an employer/Human Resources liaison is working with employers throughout the six county region, building systems to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities and providing post-employment consultation and advice on retention and accommodation strategies.

Who's Who in...

... Washington and the Region

Information on NAWDP can be obtained from:
National Association of Workforce Development Professionals
1620 I Street, NW-LL30
Washington, DC 20006-4005
(202) 887-6120
Fax: (202) 887-8216
e-mail: nawdp@aol.com
<http://www.nawdp.org>

Information on the Workforce Excellence Network can be obtained from:
Workforce Excellence Network
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Suite C-4318
Washington, DC 20210
(202) 693-2990
<http://www.workforce-excellence.net>

Information on the National Leadership Institute for WEN can be obtained from:
<http://www.wibleadership.com>



... New Hampshire

Contact for Training Issues:
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Fax: (603) 228-4145

Contact for One-Stop Career Centers:
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Contacts for Welfare Reform:
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... Massachusetts

Contacts below are at this address:
Commonwealth Corporation
The Schrafft Center
529 Main Street, Suite 110
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WIA Youth Services:
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WIA Adult Services:
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WIA Dislocated Workers:
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All of the contacts below are at the above address.

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Contact for Welfare-to-Work:
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Contact for WIA:
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Roger Therrien
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... Maine

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All of the contacts below are at the above address.

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Contact for School-to-Work:
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... Rhode Island

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REGIONAL CALENDAR

National

Practicum on Success at Work: Keys to Staying Employed and Advancing to Better Jobs, Sponsored by Public/Private Ventures; June 27, 2001; Chicago, Illinois. For more information, contact Craig Bierman at (212) 822-2413.

JETT*CONN 2001; July 16-18, 2001; Baltimore, Maryland. For more information, contact Gardner Carrick at (202) 693-3689. Check out the web site at www.jettcon.org.

Welfare-to-Work to Self-Sufficiency; August 18, 2001; Reno, Nevada. For more information, contact Michele Anthony at (703) 359-6200. Learn more about the event by visiting the web site, www.network-consortium.org.

Regional

For information about events sponsored by Region I DOL, contact Mike Angotti at (617) 727-8158.

To contribute, make comments, and/or provide feedback on the information presented in New England Training Currents, please contact:

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fax: (617) 242-7660

e-mail: netc@commcorp.org

Connecticut

Connecticut Training Schedule:

- Domestic Violence Awareness & Protocol; July-August 2001. Open to DOL TANF Staff and Case Managers. Contact Janice Schuyler at (860) 263-6670.
- Microsoft Office Software: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint; Summer 2001. Contact Carol Carney at (860) 263-6670.
- Telebenefits Implementation; Summer 2001. Contact Rosellen East at (860) 240-6700, ext. 5027.
- Training Tips & Techniques; June 12-13, 2001. Contact Janice Schuyler at (860) 263-6670.
- Equal Opportunity; June 20-21 and June 25-26, 2001. Contact Edward Turner Jr. at (860) 263-6069.
- WIA Reports/Continuous Improvement Tools Training; June 21, June 27, and June 28, 2001. Contact Barbara Palmer at (860) 263-6670.

For additional information on events sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Labor, contact Janice Schuyler or Barbara Palmer at (860) 263-6670.

Maine

For information on events sponsored by the Maine Bureau of Employment Services, contact Paul A. Cyr at (207) 624-6390.

Massachusetts

For information on events sponsored by the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training, check out the website at www.detma.org/workforce.

For information on events sponsored by the Commonwealth Corporation, call Michelle Files at (617) 727-8158.

New Hampshire

For information on events sponsored by the New Hampshire Department of Employment and Training, call (603) 228-4030.

Rhode Island

For training information and upcoming classes, please contact Sue Chomka at (401) 462-8712.

Vermont

For additional information sponsored by the Vermont Department of Employment and Training, call Rose Lucenti at (802) 828-4271.



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